Interview with Jay P. Moffat

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR JAY P. MOFFAT

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Why don't you give us a little of your background before you came into the Foreign Service, or where did you come from?

MOFFAT: Well, I'm a third generation Foreign Service Officer, so in a sense it was somewhat predestined. I went to Harvard College and like many of my era I went into the military, spending three years in the Army which taught me Russian.

Q: Where did you go to school for Russian?

MOFFAT: At the Army Language School in Monterey California.

Q: We're both alumni of the institution. I was there in 51. I was in the Air Force.

MOFFAT: You were in the six month program?

Q: No, the year.

MOFFAT: I was calendar year 54. We shared many of the same teachers.

Q: Usually the question is how did you hear of the Foreign Service, but obviously that doesn't pertain. A third generation. Just explain what your grandparents and parents did.

MOFFAT: My grandfather, Joseph Clark Grew, was ambassador in a number of posts, ending up in Japan. He was also twice Under Secretary of State in the days when they only had one.

Q: His book, Turbulent Era, led me into the Foreign Service.

MOFFAT: I'm glad to hear that. And then my father, who was already in the Foreign Service, married Mr. Grew's daughter and I'm the next generation down.

Q: When you were going to school did you think in terms of this is what you're going to do?

MOFFAT: No, I didn't want to do it. No, I just sort of slid into it. That was a much less complex era. I applied to one college and got into it, all my friends applied to one college. I applied to the Foreign Service somewhat casually and got into it, and just sort of slid on into the career.

Q: This mirrors very much what happened with me. I took the exam just on the side. Did you have any encouragement from your parents?

MOFFAT: My father had long since died. He died when I was quite young. About ten years old. I think my grandfather was happy. I had an assortment of uncles and cousins who were also in the Foreign Service and so to a certain extent nobody was surprised.

Q: You came in in 1956. What were you doing?

MOFFAT: I was just out of the Army.

Q: Where had you served in the Army?

MOFFAT: Other than Monterey, I served at the National Security Agency at Arlington Hall across the river.

Q: I served a parallel, in the Security Service of the Air Force. At first you spent about two years in INR?

MOFFAT: I was in the great rush of people who were brought in after the McCarthy era. They brought people in in large numbers in my year. In fact they raised the exam scores of some candidates to enable them to get in. So we were one of the first big entering classes. I got assigned initially to BI (Biographic Information), a function that no longer is in the department. It has been transferred to the Central Intelligence Agency. It was considered Outer Siberia for Foreign Service types. Actually it was rather fun. I did British Africa. After a year I got rescued and became the staff assistant to Hugh Cumming, who was the director of the bureau. I spent a year doing that.

Q: What was your impression of your first tour in the bureau of intelligence and research...as an assistant to the head of it. Did you get a feel for how it was used or not used. How did it fit within the Department framework?

MOFFAT: I didn't have a very coherent view. Hugh Cumming was an estimable old line Foreign Service Officer. He was trying to make the Bureau into a more immediately involved entity in the policy process. INR has always been torn in its mission as to whether it is supposed to back off and provide untrammeled advice from afar or whether it is to be a policy player. Certainly at that time the trend was to try to bring it back from the former, which I think the prior director had seen as its mission, to the more policy-oriented role that Hugh Cumming felt comfortable with.

The fun part was attending as a “spear holder” the weekly meetings with Alan Dulles and the heads of the various Intelligence Agencies around Washington. We used to meet across the street in the Navy area which was then the CIA Headquarters. I learned one

thing from all that: Intelligence that relates to policy questions reflects where you are coming from. Those were the days of the great debate on missile gaps and things like that. I learned very quickly, for example, that somehow the Air Force would see things very differently from Army or State.

Q: And each one had basically a different point of view.

MOFFAT: Yes, yes, and it was amazing how the intelligence interpretations fell in line with the interests of the agencies. It was an education.

Q: This is a process that is going on all the time in Washington or anywhere. The young men and young women who were holding the briefcases and sitting behind these people were making judgments, were learning a lot more about the system, more than even their superiors realized. Your first posting, you went to Kobe-Osaka. Is that right? This is 1958-60? What were you doing there?

MOFFAT: I was a vice consul and I did consular work. A year of general consular work and then visas the second year.

Q: Weren't you given the impression that this was a period in which Japan was not yet showing the sort of economic muscle that things were beginning to move there? Do you get any feel about how Japan and the United States were fitting together at least from the vice consul viewpoint?

MOFFAT: In terms of economics, I always like to cite hidden indicators that told us that the boom was on. For example, we lived in a Japanese house and when we arrived the “honey bucket” man as we used to call him would come and pay for the privilege of emptying the stuff and by the time we left we had to pay him to do it.

Q: In my time the "honey bucket" man was the man who came and removed the human waste to use for fertilizer. All around the far East the fields reeked of this and it was very good fertilizer. Not very healthy sometimes.

MOFFAT: I would say we were out in left field out in Kobe-Osaka. Douglas MacArthur II was the Ambassador at that time. He never penetrated into our consular district, which was a very close second to the Tokyo area in importance. Never in the two year period. It was also the period that riots were beginning, demonstrations I should say, only occasionally riots. We had our share down in Kobe and Osaka, but except for the Korean population of which there was a considerable number in the area, the demonstrators at that point were very amiable and polite.

Q: This was the time when President Eisenhower was scheduled to come and didn't because of the treatment obviously awaiting him. Were you getting much of this in Kobe-Osaka? And was this anti-American? Or was this something else.?

MOFFAT: I think it was something else. It certainly was not anti-American in personal terms and there was no feeling of personal danger. You could walk into the middle of the demonstrations. It was a lively period.

Q: Were you working on things, was there much to do?

MOFFAT: We were an incompetent bunch down there at that time. We had a not very professional—we had some good people but the post was mismanaged. As I say we were out in left field.

Q: What? This was a time of change—in Japan. Looking at both the time that you are a freshman diplomat, and later served as Ambassador but you were vice consul there—looking both at the time you were there and later on-what should the officers have been doing in Kobe-Osaka during this 58 to 60 period. The Japanese were beginning to stir.

MOFFAT: I think individual officers were doing the right thing. We had very professional officers below the top two levels. What they did was perspicacious and all the rest of it, but the post was not well run. Embassy Tokyo was absorbed in itself and didn't pay much attention to the provinces, so I think a lot of what we did was wasted or misused. We had a number of Japanese-language officers there who were very able. Again I was very young, very junior and I had more than I could handle with my own work and only looking back on it reached these conclusions. Embassy Tokyo was slow to take an interest in what was going on with the Japanese people and in the provinces. This wasn't too long after the war and the occupation arrangements. I think everything lagged behind the developments.

Q: I always thought we should have been more up on things. Keep moving on. You went to Paris as a Political Officer. 1960 to 1965.

MOFFAT: My initial 6 to 8 months was as staff aide to Ambassador Gavin and I moved from there into the Political section.

Q: Ambassador Gavin was an interesting person. He was put in there specifically by President Kennedy because he had been an Army officer—the youngest paratroop Army General. The first to jump on the morning of D-Day. The idea was both to get away from putting just a rich fat cat in but also somebody who could appeal to the de Gaulle government. Yet, it didn't seem to have been terribly successful. That was my impression. How did you see it?

MOFFAT: I think you have to recreate the ambiance of the time. Anything Kennedy did was terribly exciting and the press was all agog. This nomination was part of that. And maybe more was expected of it than could be carried by any individual. Gavin was a very honorable man, and I think he probably didn't really want to serve in Paris. But he felt it his duty. I know he felt very sensitive about not speaking French. And he would sometimes say that he minded deeply but that he was willing to be humiliated if necessary because it was his duty. But Kennedy and perhaps at the beginning he himself did not realize that

de Gaulle was not about to have a special relationship with anyone. He came closest with Bohlen, who followed Gavin. I will talk about that in a minute. We tend to forget now but back then the French government at the direction of General de Gaulle was trying to wean the French people, and by extension French policy, from U.S. influence. And we were under a tremendous barrage of anti-American propaganda. The government-controlled radio and television held our country up to ridicule. They had a weekly program I remember, like Sixty Minutes, called Cinq Colonnes # la une (Five Column Headline) with five vignettes. One time four of the five vignettes on this program were anti-American. Racial problems, this and that. We squawked and the next week they included an item on churches in New England to make up for it. What de Gaulle was up to was essentially distancing France from the United States. Other than the visit by Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy to Paris, which was high theater at that time, lots of emotion and all the rest of it, other than that, we were already started on what took on a more and more strongly anti-American tinge.

Q: There is nothing like being the staff aide to the Ambassador to get a feel of things. You are sort of off to one side that you're there. What was our feeling towards the French? Are these just the French? I've heard this so many times, in the Foreign Service. You sort of shrug you shoulders and say the French are always going to be contrary. Or did you see this as a deliberate campaign?

MOFFAT: I think President Kennedy had an absolute fascination with the French. And felt that perhaps he could personally do a lot in the relationship. I don't think he could, because de Gaulle had made up his mind the way he wanted to go. The Embassy was again in this sort of ambience of the time. We were sent a scholar, Nicholas Wahl. He was a French expert from Academia. He was supposed to straighten the Embassy out. He knew France better than we knew France, etc. although we had some real experts there. There was this absolute fascination with de Gaulle the man, with France the country, and so on from Kennedy on down. And every one was going to try—the Kennedy visit was

quite something in terms of theater and public mood. It was the first trip out of the country for Kennedy, as President. It was the time when Jackie Kennedy was made so much of.

Q: I can shut my eyes and remember that she looked so smashing.

MOFFAT: And there is the famous line that he was the man who came with Jackie. There is an interesting insight to the early Kennedy administration. We were all roped into running the mechanics of the visit, and it was a zoo because the Kennedy people all came and they were all chiefs and no Indians. They were all tossing off dicta and orders but there was no one in their party who took care of any sort of details. I think maybe with time they got that sorted out.

Q: Looking at the early period. Were you the equivalent to the country team just sitting around figuring out how do we to the French. Or was it a feeling that this was de Gaulle's policy and really we're not going to change it.

MOFFAT: At the beginning I don't thing anybody knew. It was still slowly coming to light. I went on to the Political Section which very large and very subdivided. I was the man for Asia, which quickly translated into the problems of Red China, which the French went ahead and recognized, and of Indochina where first in the case of Laos and later increasingly with Vietnam and Cambodia we got very much involved with the French and did not always have congruent policies.

Q: What were you getting. In the first place were you dealing with France officials at this level.

MOFFAT: I was dealing with French officials and the representatives official and unofficial of the countries involved. A lot also with journalists, scholars and with the resident communities of those countries. The Vietnamese for instance had 20 thousand-odd people in the Paris area. They all wanted to be president. They all wanted to tell you about it.

Q: I was told at one point that there were more Vietnamese doctors in Paris than there were in all of South Vietnam.

MOFFAT: They all had a solution which involved their going back and taking over! I am sure many other people have said it more eloquently, but de Gaulle's policies of distancing himself from the United States and taking an independent role was not entirely shared by a lot of the French officialdom who were still imbued with Atlantic cooperation and a conviction that France could not be entirely independent. So, there were a lot of French officials who did not agree with their government's policy and that made them quite easy to talk to. It removed the m#fiance that you got officially. And for instance on North Vietnam, where the French kept a Delegation General, they provided us with information which was of great use to us back then. Dealing with the French officials was tricky but it was fun. Your own energy was the only limiting factor in getting around and talking to people.

Q: De Gaulle's recognition of Communist China, you were in the Political section at that time.

MOFFAT: Yes.

Q: Were people in our Embassy sitting around prior to this saying okay what can de Gaulle do, one that will be startling, that is in the realm of possibility and will be sort of sticking it to us? This must be almost number one because we were spending so much effort to keep Red China unrecognized and out of the UN.

MOFFAT: Your question presupposes that de Gaulle did it to spite us, if you will. In that case I think de Gaulle did it with good and sufficient reason of his own. And I think in the light of history he made the right decision. I don't want to get into that. But I think he read the realpolitik tea leaves and decided that this was a good thing for France. And it was unnatural not to do it. But on that one we called it somewhat badly for Washington—until fairly late in the game we thought he wouldn't recognize partially because Chiang Kai-shek

was with de Gaulle the last World War II “colleague” still going. But again when French television, which is government controlled, finally had its ten minute children's program going to China for a trip we knew the decision had been made. You often got clues from what the government decreed should be purveyed to the French public.

Q: Were you getting, from the level you were dealing with, from the French officials that was of much interest coming out from China or do you feel that the French had put their initiative in there but it was just sort of there, it was no great opening?

MOFFAT: No, no great opening. And a little bit later you had an absolutely incredible situation where some of the French diplomats were spat on and yelled at by a Chinese crowd egged on by the government. But de Gaulle took it and did not make a case of it. I can assure you that if the Americans had done that or anybody else there would have been a real rumpus. I cite that just to show that the French did not have an easy time. I left in 1965. But they had not come up with anything easy or particular interesting. I think de Gaulle didn't necessarily expect much in the short run but wanted the investment in the new policy of opening to Red China and this was a long haul sort of thing not necessarily to be crowned with any immediate benefits.

Q: What were you getting from your contacts in the French foreign ministry and elsewhere about the situation in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia?

MOFFAT: Initially after transfer into the political section I was involved in the Laos negotiations. You may remember there were the “three princes” as they were called. Particularly Souvanna Phouma spent a great deal of time in Paris. Governor Harriman and Michael Forrestal of the NSC would shuttle over and we'd go round and round wooing the neutralist Souvanna. We got deeply involved in that and the French were very much involved. Everyone had his own agenda. Souvanna would pull into town and the Russians would wine and dine him and the Americans would wine and dine him and French would wine and dine him—and then the British would do it. And that took an enormous amount

of time and energy. We got some wonderful anecdotes out of it and the Lao are wonderful people and it was great fun. Eventually at least for a while it had a happy result. It was sorted out and agreements reached in Geneva. The French were quite helpful because they had wanted us to play the neutralist card as it was called back in those days and go with Souvanna rather than Phoumi Nosavan, who was our man, or Souphanouvong who was the Communist man. So we were pretty close with the French on that. They had their own agenda but it included cooperation with us. On Vietnam we were quite far apart. It was the time of Nhu and Madam Nhu, and coups were going on and the French were interested in protecting their surviving assets, if you will, in Vietnam their presence and influence in the north and south and their vestigial (but very significant to them) cultural assets, schools and things like that. They thought we were wrong in our policies in Vietnam and they didn't hesitate to tell us. But Vietnam was still very much a political question in France and there were plenty of Frenchmen who thought their own government's policy a bit short-sighted. From both the right and the left we were being bombarded. There were major demonstrations outside the Embassy and it was a very lively time. The French were not happy with our policies.

Q: Did you find that the French officials you were dealing with, were they basically in accord with the French policy or were they doing their duty but you didn't feel they wanted to see someone get involved there or what?

MOFFAT: They had a bureau in the Quai d'Orsay which was our normal vis-a-vis called Asie-Oceanie. Within that there was an office for Indochina. Those people we dealt with were businesslike and not terribly involved in the ideological aspects of the greater picture. There was even Madame de Gaulle's niece in there. It was the sort of relationship you would have with colleagues who are working on problems of interest to you and they were certainly open and friendly. At the top there was a Breton called Manac'h who was head of the entire bureau who was very open very friendly—but certainly could not be faulted by any side for partiality. He was a real pro, an unsung hero at the time. I remember I had to deal with him just before the recognition of Red China was announced. We had

been given one story by Pompidou that they weren't going to do it. Clearly they were going to do it, and there was great confusion. Manac'h just said this is the way it is. A very estimable man. Higher than that in the Foreign Ministry and in other ministries, and in the Presidency itself there were other people for whom the controlling issue was whether French independence and/or Atlantic cooperation and so on. For some of them the merits of the case in Laos or Vietnam or Red China or whatever were subsidiary to the need to keep the Atlantic world together. For some of them it was very tough to be kicking us in the teeth. Even today, however, I hesitate to name names.

Q: When did de Gaulle pull France out of NATO?

MOFFAT: That was in 66, after I left.

Q: There was already a distance in there.

MOFFAT: Yes, the process was well begun.

Q: One other thing that was in your direct realm of responsibility, the decolonization of Africa. How were we seeing what the French were doing it seemed to be almost nasty in some countries that did not agree with France.

MOFFAT: Well it was nasty at times. As an Embassy Paris tended to focus on the big questions of the day. For me on Asia and Alan Lukens and Peter Sebastian on Near East Africa there was a lot of room to play because the rest of the Embassy was preoccupied. (I did Africa when the fellow wasn't there). Algeria was an exception in having the highest levels of Embassy attention. When I got to Paris in January 61, we were expecting the parachutists to drop out of the sky from the revolt of the military down in Algiers. It was near the end of the long tortuous process of Algeria's fight for independence and it really tore the French apart. There were bombings all the time in Paris all through our first six months or so. You could lie in bed at night and hear booms, as the plastiques would go off in the town. I was in the Quai d'Orsay when a plastique that had been hidden in

the diplomatic pouch went off in the courtyard killing the poor fellow loading it. It really was very, very traumatic for the French. Algeria had been part of France unlike the rest of Africa. It turned Frenchman against Frenchman. It was highly significant. Kennedy's connection with Algeria and other things played into to this.

Q: Kennedy as a Senator had talked about a free Algeria. This was probably the most well known pronouncement Kennedy made as a Senator.

MOFFAT: There was a feeling that we should pay more attention to Black Africa. Indeed the minister at the Embassy went down by military plane and visited most if not all of the francophone countries. Back then there was tremendous suspicion among the French that the United States would try to replace France in Black Africa. France was still running its black African countries. Almost every month there would be a visit with flags up and down the Champs-Elys#es for yet another black chief of state. de Gaulle had failed a couple of years earlier in his effort to have a French Union. Starting with Guinea, of course, and then the others, the francophone Africans acceded to independence. For the first few years it was a very very qualified independence. So we ran up against the suspicions of the French. That made it fairly tough. Also, French Africa was run out of the Elys#e, the presidential palace. Foccart was really in charge of African affairs and he was a very difficult man to get to talk to. In a way he was not entirely of the government. He was an outsider. So it was a period when the U.S. was coming to know black Africa a little better but French black Africa much less well than the other parts. It was a period of great French suspicion of our intentions.

Q: Was there a problem, because one of the things when Kennedy came in was the new broom and the new look and all that, and you had Governor Mennen Williams when he was in charge of African Affairs, someone was much more prominent than any one has been since in charge of that area? Was there a feeling among you in the Embassy that the Kennedy administration and those around it were too big mouth and they were talking

about doing things that would certainly arouse the suspicions of the French that we had something else in mind?

MOFFAT: Well it could have been. “Soapy” Williams as he was called was always through Paris because he was constantly visiting in Africa. It was a good and pleasant way to get there. He did a very good job. Not much money and a lot of mirrors and the rest of it. I don't know, that's beyond me. He was put there because they needed a place to put someone who had been a potential candidate for the presidency. They were sticking such people all over the department. I think Soapy Williams may have led the administration —he wanted to make something of the job—rather than reflecting the administration's wanting to do something.

Q: Could we go back to Ambassador Bohlen. Compare and contrast how he operated. How you saw him.

MOFFAT: For us as professionals in the Embassy, he was a wonderful boss and if you'll look in his book he cites the Embassy Paris of that time as the best he ever worked in. Everything came together and seemed to click. We had one problem. Oversimplifying, there were Gaullists and anti-Gaullists as we called them in the Embassy. I was in the Anti-Gaullist category but the persuasions of the other levels above me alternated going up. We used to wait until the “Gaullists” were on leave or something to get our cables out ... But anyway that's another story.

Q: Did the Centrists in the Embassy speak a unified language?

MOFFAT: Not necessarily. It was more a way things were cast. There were some people who retained an admiration and fondness for de Gaulle and there were some of us who saw him as the devil incarnate and so of course we phrased our things differently. But Bohlen had a very professional embassy and was a wonderful boss and gave great latitude to people. In response for the most part they did not cause him any grief. He had only one weakness. He could not write the English language, and we all had to rush to

get to his own cables before he would send them out. He understood de Gaulle. He was frustrated by the difficulty in dealing with him as anyone would be. He rolled with the punch and knew the limits and I think got the maximum out of that relationship that could be gotten. I know de Gaulle from his side was a great admirer of Bohlen and enjoyed dealing with him but that didn't make him change his policies. It made life a little easier, however, and we got the maximum out of it that we could. As with King Hassan of Morocco, whom we will come to later on, de Gaulle could not have a real and a normal relationship with anybody. Both men transcended normal relationships. They could have warm personal ties but they operated in a different dimension and didn't deal with mortals the way other people do.

Q: Was Vernon Walters there when you were there?

MOFFAT: He came through to interpret but he was not permanently assigned. As you must know he has a lot of anecdotes about de Gaulle from his interpreting days.

Q: I have heard in other interviews being done that that particular Embassy as being the most professional one. An awful lot of people, some you might call stars but more than that these were just a very very professional Embassy at a very difficult time.

MOFFAT: That's true. And we were big enough. We had one fellow who sort of went off his head, a mid-level political officer. We were numerous enough to carry him. Although he still was there, he wasn't functioning as a productive officer. You don't always get such flexibility in a small post. Other than that, yes, you are right.

Q: How well did you feel you were backed up —this was a difficult time, difficult reporting, that you were backed up by the Department of State, both at the sort of the desk the bureau and Secretary's level?

MOFFAT: Well, I was backed up by a different part of the department, the Far East Bureau. We were I think well treated by that Bureau, but by the time I left we were getting

into the phase of “How do we get out of Vietnam—how do we deal through other than official channels?” That was a little bit hard. We were over in Paris and this sort of thing was not communicated to us through normal channels. Actually when I left I was replaced by an officer who was an old 01. This will mean nothing to an outsider but was four or five grades higher than I was.

Q: The equivalent of a major general or something?

MOFFAT: Not too long after there were negotiations in Paris. Before that there were reportedly preliminary contacts using our personal country house I turned over to another member of the Embassy. Things were beginning to cook. I felt a little out in left field in my last few months. I was already over my time but if I had stayed on that would have had to be sorted out. Not that the US government would necessarily have done so.

Q: You came back to Washington at this point, in 1965 and served at the Benelux desk.

MOFFAT: I was the Benelux desk. First it was in the Office of Western European affairs and then, when the country director system came into effect, it was split up and I stayed in France/Benelux Affairs doing the same thing.

Q: This was 1965 to 1969?

MOFFAT: It was three years, 1965-68.

Q: It is kind of hard to think of much...Benelux sort of sits off to one side. There must have been things that were ticking with France or somewhere else. With that particular bloc or European country.

MOFFAT: Well I would have said so, but at that particular time we still had two colorful and very great men active: Joseph Luns in the Netherlands, where he was Foreign Minister, and Paul-Henri Spaak in Belgium as the Prime Minister. They saw to it that the Benelux countries didn't get forgotten. Although not handled out of our office, the move

of the NATO facilities to Belgium took place during this time so there was a tremendous rumpus going on then. We had a lot of bilateral problems for example with the Dutch, such as Indonesian refugees and aviation rights. With Belgium we concerted constantly on the Congo. Luxembourg, well Luxembourg is Luxembourg. So, in the office of France/ Benelux Affairs, France was the senior sister of the two, but my side was lively and it was interesting.

Q: Just to get a feel as to what an officer would do as his responsibility. What was a major problem you had to deal with and how did you deal with it?

MOFFAT: For a desk officer, time spent makes little sense. But your job is to take things of varying importance and somehow compress them for your seniors into what's important and what they should spend time on. Every time there was a NATO meeting, I'd have to write three sets of papers, one for Belgium, one Netherlands one for Luxembourg. The typical problems would be bilateral. The multilateral aspects went to either the economic regional office or the political/military regional office. The aviation rights issue or, for instance, the Congo were major time takers. Having three countries, there were always preparations for official Americans going there and their people coming to Washington. We also covered Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. It was a little bit of everything, a lot of the ridiculous and occasionally the sublime. I'm sorry that it isn't very exciting. But that is the way it was.

Q: Trying to get a feel for somebody who looks at these things. What you do. Sometimes the desk officers is the title that is often misleading. You then went to Bonn for three years.

MOFFAT: No, I became the staff assistant to Secretary Rusk for his final six months and then stayed on for “continuity” for the first three or four months of Mr. Rogers.

Q: What were you doing?

MOFFAT: In those sexist days there were two men in his office and a bunch of “girls” or secretaries. Harry Shlaudeman was the senior man and I was the junior man. Rusk had been there for eight years and knew what he wanted, and we were essentially facilitative. We did not get into policy. We knew what was was going on. It was a wonderful vantage point. But, we did such unglamorous things as choosing among the multitude of reports and underling for him in green what he should read. He was an eye oriented person. He'd much rather read something than be told about it. So we had the power of the green pen. A lot of it was trivia, some of it was vastly important but it was facilitative. Getting him to the right place at the right time, to talk to the right person, bouncing things that he shouldn't have to be bothered with. That sort of thing. When Rogers came in all the affairs in and around “S” left except me and I was supposed to add an element of continuity to how things were done. But like every new administration Rogers and indeed the Nixon administration were very suspicious of the Department of State. It was a very tense time because both sides were coming to know each other. Rogers had met a fellow called Dick Pedersen when they had both been involved with some session at the UN. They'd had this past contact so he brought Dick Pedersen in as Counselor to the Department. Pedersen became his man in the beginning for what he should do and who he should see. At a lower level I was doing the same thing. Rogers very kindly asked me to stay on after the first three or four months but I asked if I could move on. I'd been doing too much staff assisting in my career as it was.

Q: How was the transition between the Johnson administration and the Nixon administration carried out. There was always a suspicion that some takeovers between are two administrations and particularly in the State Department are almost essentially really hostile takeovers. I think Kennedy group came in, with Eisenhower it was hostile, certainly the Reagan group came in it was hostile—how did you feel about this one?

MOFFAT: This was a hostile one, but not personally hostile. Secretary Rogers was an estimable man, a real gentleman. But he had a ingrained feeling that the Department was

not to be trusted. That colored everything for the first few months anyway. It was a real break, there was no smoothly sliding from one Administration to the next. Also, I think as people saw it coming they started scrambling for the exits.

Q: One of the things to do is to get out and get overseas if you can. Out of the line of sight.

MOFFAT: And also, there was an obligato in the background in all this, the hairy times with Vietnam. This was playing havoc with the Department, distorting the regular rhythm and function of much of the Foreign Service.

Q: You said you felt you were too long as a staff assistant, why would one feel that this was a bad thing?

MOFFAT: I wouldn't say too long in this particular function. But I had been a staff assistant in INR, to an Ambassador, and to one Secretary and now a second. Some people thrive on the constant pressure, there is a lot of glamour that goes with it, but I wanted to get back to the regular trench warfare.

Q: How did you get your next assignment?

MOFFAT: Well, I was offered two, one in Oporto in Portugal and the other in Switzerland. I can't remember now why I chose Bern, but I think it was a question of timing and schools, which are always questions that play a big role. I went to Switzerland for eighteen months.

Q: What were you doing in Switzerland?

MOFFAT: I was the Political officer in Switzerland, a position that later also accreted the past USIA functions.

Q: Who was our Ambassador?

MOFFAT: Shelby Cullom Davis was the Ambassador.

Q: He was a political appointee?

MOFFAT: Oh, yes. He was the first ambassadorial appointment announced by the new administration. He was very close to Mitchell, the attorney general. I think he got his appointment through Mr. Mitchell.

Q: Switzerland, one can't help but say watches and cuckoo clocks or something like that. What were our interests in Switzerland?

MOFFAT: Our interests were in the economic area, financial cooperation, legal arrangements to try to track down American miscreants who used the Swiss banking system. The political side was pretty thin gruel. We had the Swiss representation of our interests in Cuba and Algeria. Domestic developments in Switzerland. It was not a terribly exciting post. Fun, nice, a rest. When I got offered a DCM-ship in Trinidad I jumped at it.

Q: You were the DCM there from 1971 to 1974. Who was the Ambassador?

MOFFAT: I had three ambassadors. Fife Symington, a Republican Symington of the same family. A cousin of Stuart Symington. He was very much a political ambassador, later got into the newspapers when he had been promised a European post by Peter Flanagan in the White House after a large contribution and then Flanagan was unable to produce. Ambassador Symington, who was an honorable man, had the good grace not to demand his money back. It was very much a political appointment. And then later, there was Tony Marshall, likewise a political ambassador, but he had already been in Madagascar and went on to Kenya later. With the third one, there was just a few days overlap.

Q: What were American interests at the time?

MOFFAT: American interests were two. One was oil. When you think of the Caribbean islands you think of volcanic soil paradises, but Trinidad is really a part of South America that has been cut off by a few miles of water. It is a big oil producer. We had Texaco,

Tesoro, Amoco all active there. We also had the remnants of a major World War II Navy Base at Chaguaramas. We still had a missile test monitoring station there. Our second main interest was to get out of the basing there with good grace and a good deal. Also Trinidad together with Jamaica was sort of big brother to the island nations of the Caribbean. We were even then trying desperately to find ways to keep the island Caribbean from going down the tubes economically. And finally, Trinidad is a great source of illegal immigration to the United States. It's a visa mill, the embassy there. In terms of manpower and time there was a great distortion towards the consular side of things.

Q: How were the Ambassadors there. As a professional Foreign Service Officer—did they pretty much let you run the shop? What did they concentrate on?

MOFFAT: They were very different. Symington liked the big picture, liked the ceremonial side. He'd been there some time when I got there. He felt free to go away and come back to the U.S. for long visits. He left the running of the embassy pretty much to me. I should say in all this that the important thing in Trinidad was the grand old man, Eric Williams. He was the father of his country and had considerable stature in the Caribbean. Any Ambassador stood or fell on his relationship with Eric Williams. This was becoming quite difficult. It became very difficult under my second Ambassador. Eric Williams became more and more reclusive and difficult to call on, to see to talk to. I could still talk to him because he knew me from earlier, but the new people coming in—not just the American Ambassador, but the British High Commissioner—couldn't and that was a very awkward situation. Eric Williams was a brilliant man, a scholar and all that but he didn't have many people to sharpen his mind against. Over time he would get a certain distortion where he would put the important and the unimportant on the same level. He lost some perspective. He'd be talking about something very significant and then he'd ramble on about minor things. De Gaulle did it occasionally. What he needed was somebody who didn't have an axe to grind. Most of the people in his country and a lot of the visitors had their own

agendas. So he very much liked a chance to try out his ideas and have someone tell him (politely) when he was crazy. And intermittently I was able to fill that function.

Q: There is always this problem of the DCM coming in and obviously knowing his way around because this is his job. A political appointee comes in and you already have a the DCM in place. In some ways nothing is a worse curse than as a DCM to have a close relationship with the Chief of State. How did you work this out?

MOFFAT: There were two sides to it. One, Tony Marshall was near to being a pro. He came from the outside but he had had some time in the Foreign Service and knew what it was about. He was the victim not of any thing to do with him, it was just this increasing reclusivity on the part of Eric Williams which got worse and worse and worse. I will tell you an anecdote later. I had to dress things up a little but, I went to a lot of functions where Ambassadors wouldn't just on the hope of seeing Williams. As a politician he would go to openings or concerts or whatever. The common man kind of thing. If you were there you could frequently sidle up and he'd be happy to have a talk. I never to my recollection made a formal call on him, rather used these occasions to talk to him. Then the protocol was all right. I would run into him and we'd talk about this, that and the other. You can draft reports so that who talked to him doesn't show. It was uncomfortable but it was not unmanageable. But you're right the situation you describe can be a horrible thing. Mr. Bloch in Vienna.

Q: Felix Bloch is sort of an unindicted spy. He was our DCM in Vienna. A classmate of the Austrian Foreign Minister. This is causing all sorts of difficulties.

MOFFAT: My one soapbox in this is one thing I've preached with declining success to the modern FSOs: You have to do a lot of things that you don't particularly want to do. Particularly investments in time and places and people who are not immediately worthwhile, but can lead to something or someone else more useful. In Morocco, where we had a large junior officer program, I really had a hard time getting them to take this

on board. It's a generational thing. I think now the new FSO's want to be paid for any extra work after hours, or going to things they don't want. It's gone so far as proposals for being paid for going to national day parties. Back to my promised anecdote. After I left Eric Williams continued to become more and more remote. The British High Commissioner reportedly complained so loudly and long that he could not see Eric Williams that, so the story goes, in the middle of the night he was routed out of his bed and taken to William's house and Williams came down to the door in his bathrobe and said, “Now you've seen me,” and turned on his heel and walked back into the house. Which may be apocryphal but I think is true. It certainly would be in character. Anyway Trinidad was fun. I think we did a good job on the Naval Base and we promoted American oil company interests quite well. I think that of all our posts in terms of just plain fun it was number one.

Q: One of the things propounded by many university professors is that economics drives our foreign relations. And so often when I say what are our economic interests in such and such a country I get almost a blank look. In this case would you say that the oil interests were important, and what do we do about it. We say they were important, but what would our Embassy do?

MOFFAT: In the particular case of Trinidad if I can use that as an example, Texaco had been there for a long time. Texaco traditionally held its cards close to its chest and we couldn't get much involved in their doings and they didn't want us involved. They had real problems—labor problems—problems with the government. We got involved more as an Embassy with Tesoro, a fairly small producer, and Amoco a big explorer and producer which came in for off-shore oil. There were very good oil fields off the east coast of Trinidad. So our efforts were more towards easing the way for Amoco and to a lesser extent Tesoro. Getting them and the government off on the right foot. Sort of trying to foster the interests of American business. It was not competitive among the three companies. Amoco was new and involved in off-shore exploration and production. Texaco was working very old oil fields that had been operated for decades down in the southwest part of the country. Their problem was essentially to get out of Trinidad pretty much as

best it could and in face of a highly political and powerful labor union: the Oil Workers Trade Union. We got involved in that to a certain extent because we were trying to keep things from blowing up. It was a major problem for the government—and the oil workers.

Q: Were we telling the oil companies to remember their other interests besides just oil?

MOFFAT: Yes, we were. Texaco in general, and not in Trinidad did not want anybody to know what they were doing and what their plans were. They viewed us every bit as much as the enemy trying to spy on them. You can further U.S. business interests but a lot depends on whether the particular business wants help. Sometimes they see you as an impediment.

Q: Move on then? You went to the NATO War College for 6 months. And then you came back. You said you tried to avoid staff assistantships, you were the Deputy Executive Secretary. You came back to Washington as sort of a super staff assistant.

MOFFAT: Yes in a sense, but it was a Deputy Assistant Secretary-level position which is one which you aspire to. It was supervision basically. I was the junior of the three deputies. I in essence supervised two of the three operating arms of the executive secretary: the operations center and the information management section. Things like that. It was more a management than staff job.

Q: This was in 1974 to 1976. This was the time when Henry Kissinger was in full bloom. Nixon was leaving. You had seen the Rusk and a little of the Rogers' stewardship, and all of a sudden you came back to Kissinger. Could you describe it from your point of view how Henry Kissinger operated?

MOFFAT: Henry Kissinger operated very, very differently. The Executive Secretary is also a special assistant to the Secretary. Back in the days of Ben Reed for example, under Rusk, he was every bit a major policy player in the Department. He was also Executive Secretary. Under Kissinger the Executive Secretary was just that, he might be a special

assistant on paper, but he did not operate as a major policy player. We all tried to stay out of trouble. Henry Kissinger was a fearsome figure and an enraged Henry Kissinger was a particularly fearsome figure. He struck terror. One of our functions was controlling documents with various categories like Nodis and Exdis and Stadis and things like that.

Q: "Dis" stands for distribution.

MOFFAT: We were constantly being used by Henry Kissinger to control who saw documents. He felt very, very strongly that knowledge is power. He felt very strongly that he didn't want any of his henchmen—I don't use that term in a derogatory sense but to try to illustrate—he didn't want any of them knowing everything. With the possible exception of Eagleburger. We would get orders that Hal Sonnenfeldt or whoever could see this set of cables but not that. Or could have this or not that. And the Sonnenfeldts of this world or the Win Lords or whoever all knew that they didn't know everything that Kissinger was doing. And there were things that we didn't know. We probably knew as much as anyone since we controlled these documents. People from other agencies would come and plead with us to let them have access. CIA and others, but we just couldn't. Everyone was at everyone else's throat, which was just as Henry Kissinger wanted it. Everyone spent a lot of time on thrashing around trying to find what was going on. We were in the middle. That was very unpleasant. You get a feeling of being battered after a while.

Q: Looking back on this unpleasant time did you feel this was to the greater glory of Henry Kissinger or was this an effective way to get things done in the Washington bureaucracy?

MOFFAT: I think it was both. He had a method of operating where he wanted to keep some tension—creative tension—or whatever going. He seemed to thrive on it. Whether it was a well thought out way of doing things or whether it was a personality factor, I just don't know. He could treat people very roughly.

Q: Could you give an example when you say treat people roughly?

MOFFAT: He would make fun of people at staff meetings. Which some people thrive on and some people don't. Those who didn't suffered. Staff meetings of the senior people of the department. He was very tough on secretaries. I know my secretary in Trinidad came up and became one of his night secretaries. She was a superb secretary. She had a tough time putting a call through one night and he fired her on the spot. The word gets out and everyone is twice as tense. It may have been for the greater good of the United States. It may have produced the best possible policy but it was tough on the people who were involved.

Q: And it might not have been. Of course one thing it does do, it tends to concentrate power. Sometimes this means the Secretary can speak and his orders are listened to.

MOFFAT: And those around him are dependent on him to know what's going on. Where to be involved and where not.

Q: Did you have any dealings with Kissinger yourself?

MOFFAT: Nothing significant. The only time I talked to Kissinger at length was when he came to Morocco as a private citizen some years later at the King's birthday party. He couldn't have been nicer or more charming and less demanding.

Q: This, I take it, was a quieter birthday party for the King than a previous one in which there was a bloody coup attempt. After you left the Executive Secretariat in 1976 you did go as Deputy Chief of Mission to Morocco. Was this a request on your part?

MOFFAT: I was offered it and took it with considerable enthusiasm.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you went out there?

MOFFAT: Robert Anderson and then it was Dick Parker and then I had six months on my own and then Angier Biddle Duke and then I left.

Q: What was the situation in Morocco when you went out in 1976?

MOFFAT: Morocco was already heavily involved in the Sahara, and the question of the Western Sahara dominated my time there, in particular the aspect of U. S. military assistance to Morocco. It became a major foreign policy question for the Carter administration.

Q: What was the Sahara situation? You had the polisario, an insurgent group backed by Algeria, particularly, in the Moroccan desert area. What was the debate in the United States Government apparatus?

MOFFAT: What had happened was that Spain had withdrawn from its part of the Western Sahara and Morocco and Mauritania had moved in, two thirds for Morocco and one third for Mauritania. Algeria and the Polisario Front claimed that there should be self-determination in this area. As you can imagine there were competing pulls and tugs in the United States. There were those who viewed Morocco as a steady and faithful ally of the U.S., the first country to recognize the infant United States, a country which did a number of things to help Israeli-Arab relations and so on. There were a whole host of reasons why we liked the Moroccans and felt they should be rewarded. On the other hand you can well imagine that there are those who feel very strongly that when there is decolonization there should be some modicum of self-determination and that these “blue men of the desert” deserved the right to determine their own destiny, that they were merely caught up in power politics. Also very much involved in this was the relationship between Algeria and Morocco. Our relationship with Morocco was much better than with Algeria, and so on and so forth. We came down with a waffling position which in effect held that the United States recognized Moroccan administrative control over the Western Sahara. (For the purposes of this discussion let's leave Mauritania out of it, eventually they gave up their part of the Sahara and Morocco took it). We recognized Moroccan administrative control but we did not recognize juridically their sovereignty. It was a waffle. This of course was mostly in the

Carter administration. Later, certainly under Haig, we came down much more strongly for Morocco.

Q: Who were the Polisario?

MOFFAT: When the Spaniards pulled out the only documentation was a UN census which showed that there were something like 75,000 inhabitants in their part of the Sahara. These were nomadic tribes, largely the Reguibat, that moved with their cattle and their warfare from place to place and might be resident in the Western Sahara one day and Mali the next and that kind of thing. With Algerian help and with publicity a lot of non-Western Saharans became part of the liberation group. This made things even more difficult, for soldiers of fortune and ideological people were drawn to the movement. It had and has a structure which involves a president and defense minister, you name it, it exists as a group, eventually won Organization of African Unity recognition, and it has caused Morocco tremendous problems. It appears that by now the Moroccans have more or less neutralized the Polisario and we may reach some sort of UN-brokered arrangement. But that is not moving too fast at this time. It was heady stuff during my time. There were camps in Tindouf in Algeria where the Polisario would repair to and come back from their raids in the desert.

Our policy was not to have any Americans go into the Western Sahara and on the other side we did not have any contacts with the Polisario. All of this played itself out over time. The Moroccans put 100,000 plus troops into the area and they desperately needed equipment. There were certain things, particularly aircraft, that they wanted. Like an old-fashioned drama we wrestled with the fundamental question: may U.S. equipment be provided to Morocco if it is known that it is likely to be used in the Sahara? Equipment, particularly F-5 aircraft, was provided and it was used in the Sahara. It was a messy situation over a number of years. That involved a great deal of time and effort by our ambassadors over the years.

Q: Obviously if a country is fighting a major war and you give them military equipment, how could you get around the fact that it is going to be used in the desert?

MOFFAT: There is some equipment that is designed to be used in the desert. OV-10's and helicopters, requested in 1977 are examples of such items. That is where the real crunch comes. I don't think that if you provide certain kinds of ammunition anyone can follow where that goes. The Moroccans have some failings in the human rights area, which didn't help. The final major decision by Carter came when I was Charg# in 1979. It was fought out on the front pages of the New York Times. When the final decision was going to be made, in a Policy Review Committee of the NSC on October 16, 1979 I got on the phone to Washington and said that every single step of previous internal deliberations had appeared on the tickers out of Washington before we could even tell the Moroccans. When the decision is reached, I continued, for God's sake, let us get to the King before he reads about it on the Agence France Presse ticker. They said, “We think we can get you three hours, maybe, by sort of tying the people up.” So we were able to get to the King's counselor, Reda Guedira, first. It was in fact just about three hours before the ultimately favorable decision was all over the press.

Q: Where was all this information coming from, and why?

MOFFAT: Because major players in the Executive Branch and Congress had their own agendas and firm positions.

Q: Why?

MOFFAT: It involved things that deeply moved people. I think that the pro-Algerian people (to call them that) or pro-Moroccan camp (I don't like to use these designations) had very, very strong feelings. The worst leaks came out of the Congressional staffers. Carter blew his stack once when he read in the press about the results of an NSC meeting before

anyone had reported to him. The issue was just one of the great leak producers of the Carter period.

Q: I just can't imagine anybody being terribly pro-Algerian.

MOFFAT: Well, they were pro-Polisario, anti-Morocco, pro-self-determination.

Q: Was it because there was a king, was this a visceral thing? Anybody who is revolting against a king has to be our kind of a good guy?

MOFFAT: There was a lot of that. Algeria was seen in some quarters as progressive. Particularly the Polisario were seen as a doughty bunch of desert innocents who were fighting for their freedom and their independence. It got terribly involved, the human rights aspect got involved. There were Congressional staffers who were just tight as a tick, wrapped up in this stuff. We had Solarz deeply involved, you name it.

Q: Solarz was a congressman on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

MOFFAT: He was viscerally pro-Polisario. He arranged for a like-minded Paul Simon (the Senator from Illinois) to come through later and study the situation. There were a lot of other things going on. We were withdrawing from Naval Bases and that was a fairly major thing. There is nothing that takes more time than getting out of Base Agreements.

Q: How did the Moroccans feel about Base Agreements?

MOFFAT: By then there were only three communications facilities involved. The King did not mind our having facilities there. He was interested in the golf course being kept going as long as possible and that things be turned over to the right people. But as in Trinidad and elsewhere, so in Morocco we turned over everything in great shape, in good running condition. A year later they were stripped bare and derelict.

There were certain things going involving Israeli interests (which I don't want to go into in this interview) and there where a lot of things involving Morocco in the Arab context, the Arab League and so forth.

Morocco is a key country in a number of ways. It has its African vocation, its Middle East vocation, its Mediterranean vocation, its Maghreb vocation, and a close relationship with France. For a variety of reasons, economic and demographic, practically any issue for thousands of miles had a Moroccan connection.

Q: Let's go back to the Polisario business. How did the Embassy view this? Often you get a situation where our Embassy in Algiers might think that the Algerians and the Polisario are obviously in the right and our Embassy in Rabat thinks just the reverse. Was this the case, how did you all feel about the situation there?

MOFFAT: Except for Dick Parker, of course, the other two ambassadors were convinced of the rightness of the Moroccan cause. Anderson's predecessor had in effect lost his audience in Washington for being blatantly pro-Morocco. I think Dick Parker had a more nuanced view of the whole thing. Some of our lower-level people probably were less convinced, but there certainly was not a situation where people felt that strongly one way or another. There was right on both sides.

Q: It was not cleaving the embassy the way it was cleaving the government back in Washington?

MOFFAT: No. There were a lot of people in the Embassy who were unhappy at what Morocco did in the field of human rights, were unhappy with the way the king ran things, that sort of thing.

Q: How would you characterize Hassan, he had been there a long time and he still is there. A lot of people thought that he would not last, but he and King Hussein of Jordan are still in power?

MOFFAT: When Hassan was first in the job, so to speak, I was in Paris. On New Years Day the papers traditionally come out with the predictions of the astrologers for the coming year. At that time, I think, there were eight dailies in Paris. All eight in 1963 or 1964 predicted that Hassan would not last out the year. Well, he is still there. During the period when I was Charg# in Rabat the Central Intelligence Agency did a NIE (National Intelligence Estimate) on Morocco. They had been under criticism from the White House for not predicting in sufficiently finite terms. So lo and behold, an NIE predicted that Hassan would not last another year. This would have been fine except that it appeared on the front page of the New York Times. You can imagine how that went over in Rabat!

I had another thing like that. Once Solarz came and talked to the king for over an hour, and the king was very forthcoming and said a lot. At the end of the conversation he beckoned me over and said, “I talked freely and I don't want what I said to be reported.” So my account went by NODIS. Three days later in Jack Anderson's column, there appeared: “In his report on the conversation, Charg# Peter Moffat said ...” Those two undercuttings by the press happened to me in my Charg# time—I don't know which was worse.

Q: How did you view Hassan?

MOFFAT: Dick Parker is the great authority on Hassan and all the rest of us are neophytes. I had a personal fascination in watching him perform and how he runs things. The one great failing in American diplomacy with King Hassan is that Americans come and this quintessential Arab host makes them feel welcome and very special, if he wants to. He has had squadrons of American leaders come over to be given the treatment. They all think, and ambassadors are not immune, that they have established some sort of relationship, which is fine by Hassan, but it does not deter him one whit from doing what

he wants. He eats ambassadors alive. It has dogged our relations with Morocco in the sense that we have people who mistakenly think that they have a special relationship with Hassan. If there is anyone who does it is probably Dick Walters, and even there I have doubts.

Q: You equated him to de Gaulle in that he operated the same way.

MOFFAT: Yes. To an extent they operated the same way. They did not follow the same laws of nature as other people. You could conceivably have had a warm personal relationship with de Gaulle but that would not have made him act a bit differently.

Q: You were in Morocco during the time of the Carter administration and the great emphasis on human rights. Almost any country that does not have a full-blown democracy Western style is obviously very vulnerable to accusations. What were the problems in Morocco as we saw them?

MOFFAT: There were several problems. Some were left over from the coup attempts against the king in '71 and '72, which led to Summary retribution. Our most continual problem was the status of prisoners, who may or may not have been political prisoners, but were kept in bad conditions. Moroccan prisons were abysmal. Amnesty International and the Anti-Slavery League were quite unhappy with what Morocco did in individual cases. In my time, it never came to a rupture, but it was a major problem. We were always running around trying to sort out the case of somebody.

Q: When you dealt with the Moroccans was it the king you saw or did you work through their hierarchy?

MOFFAT: Well, I personally saw the king only if I were accompanying somebody important, unless I was Charg#. The ambassadors saw the king on special calls every couple of months or so, and would meet him on ceremonial occasions. Certainly on the big questions the king wanted to be involved. There was a prime minister and all the

other ministers and the people in the palace. At any one time the king had three or four trusted advisors; they did not always survive politically and once literally, they were very useful. You did not have to talk to the king if you talked to one of them; you could get a message across. There was no problem of access. The real problem was—I imagine it was like service in Israel—that if you took a visitor to call there was the obligatory lengthy disquisition about the Western Sahara. You could not avoid being harangued. Only then could you get to the business at hand. Americans were well-viewed. It was tougher on the military side. Our military people, our Attach#s and MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group) people, did not always have very good access. The king did not want them to.

Q: What about the French role? I would have thought with their background the Moroccans would have turned to the French military?

MOFFAT: They did, but the French were in somewhat the same box we were. The French had to balance off their real interests in Algeria, more than we did. Everyone was playing everyone off against everyone else.

Q: How was Ambassador Robert Anderson? How did he operate and what were his major interests?

MOFFAT: Well, he is an old-line FSO, he had been ambassador in Dahomey (now Benin). He was one of the most energetic people I have ever met, quite hard on his staff, but just as hard on himself. The king does not take kindly, as a practical matter, to career ambassadors. I think he sees them as less pliable, less co-optable, than non-career ambassadors and I think the record shows that well. Dick Parker, whom you know well and is a consummate diplomat, had the same problem. It was harder for them than if they had been non-career diplomats.

Q: What you are saying is that there is a case for sending career ambassadors. We are taking about having ambassadors who represent our interests rather than be pliable to somebody else.

MOFFAT: After I left, we got to a position where we had a very weak ambassador who would talk about “our king” and so on.

Q: He ran into some trouble in confirmation because he was called the equivalent of a horse's ass.

MOFFAT: “A gold-plated nincompoop,” if I remember right.

Q: One final question on this. Did you have much of a problem on the consular side with the drug problem? Morocco used to be known as a great place for students or rich Americans to go and play with every known vice, including drugs.

MOFFAT: We had problems, indeed we had a DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) man there, but basically the problems were cannabis or hashish and involved for the most part the easy purchase in Morocco and shipping it by yacht in and between Spain and Gibraltar, but there was no coordination of policing among these entities. The boats could flee from one to the other. This is not as high a priority, for understandable reasons, as cocaine has become, and heroin already was. Yes, it was a problem, but it was not of international interest. It took a lot of time and occasionally Americans would be imprisoned and U.S. senators would object and the king would let them out.

Q: Is there anything else you think we should talk about on the Moroccan side?

MOFFAT: Only the comment that I made earlier that Morocco was a country with access and friendship for the U.S. where FSOs can make or break their performance by how much they get around and do things.

Q: In the Moroccan society, for example, not the playboy society, but the real working government and business, were they easy to know? Arab societies can be very self-sealing.

MOFFAT: It was tough on the Peace Corps. We had a large Peace Corps there and their psychic rewards were far less than in other parts of Africa. They had a pretty tough time, but among the educated Moroccans, not necessarily the playboy group, it was reasonably easy. You had to work, go from one person to another, but it was doable.

Q: What was the common prediction in the embassy about Hassan and his survivability? Outside of the obvious coup which could happen at any point, was he sitting on a situation in which he was in reasonable control, or was there tremendous discontent that might bubble over at any time?

MOFFAT: Oh, it varied. Just his sheer success tends to inure one to the fact that he has real problems. He has a sometimes restive army which is down in the Sahara, far away. Some people claim he likes it that way. There are very real social problems, stresses and strains. Yet Morocco does not have the identity problem of some of the other Arab countries. Moroccans know who they are. They are not like Tunisians who do not know if they are Frenchmen, Arabs or what all. He has embodied the religious feeling in his person. If something happened people could say they always knew it would, and if nothing happened the same people could say they knew he could last.

Q: It was not a situation where every day was a crisis?

MOFFAT: There were particular crises. After we left there were serious riots in Casablanca. There are periods of crisis, but there is some bemusement that he has done it so long and so well.

Q: Did you go to Chad from Morocco?

MOFFAT: No, I went to the Senior Seminar then to Chad. But before Chad I filled in in The Gambia and Lesotho, where the ambassadors were on leave and had resigned, respectively. They needed somebody on the spot. There had just been a mini-revolution in The Gambia and things were tense in Lesotho and they sent me out from Washington.

Q: How did you do it, to land in situations like that?

MOFFAT: They were very different situations. The Gambia was still in a state of trauma. They had had an uprising by their military force, and a lot of people were killed for a very small country—the equivalent of millions of people dead in the U.S. It was just a case of being there. I had to write reports without files. There hadn't been any reporting for years.

In Lesotho, which is surrounded by South Africa, there were certain tensions within the Lesotho body politic and South African fun and games, and they just wanted somebody reasonably reliable. In both cases there had been no DCM and the officers were young and somewhat emotional. When I was in Lesotho I got a cable that I was being offered Charg# in N'djamena in Chad. I took it with the understanding that it would be upgraded. We were just in the process of reopening our post in N'djamena which had been closed because of warfare for a couple of years. I was the first permanently assigned body there on its reopening, and we grew.

Q: Could you describe the situation there? You arrived in March 1982.

MOFFAT: The government that had been set up was something like a government of national union and was in the process of imploding, partially because of its own incompetence. But also because Hissen Habre, who had retired from the earlier frays and was building up his forces in Sudan and Eastern Chad, was starting his march across Chad towards taking power. We were supporting the government until four or five weeks before the end.

Q: What had been our history in Chad?

MOFFAT: Over the preceding few years one of basically just holding on. Twice the Embassy had been evacuated, fortunately without loss of life, but it had been a close thing. Fighting had raged in the city for months at a time. Chad had been independent since 1960, the French had always favored the South and the South had been left in control. The Northern leaders, who were more powerful, were in the process of asserting themselves and it led to a lot of warfare. The Southerners were, in essence, overthrown, and then the Northerners started fighting among themselves and in 1979 and 1980 we got in the middle of battle and finally we pulled out.

Q: Was the North-South split sort of equivalent to that of the Sudan where the North was more white, Arab, Islamic and the South, black and animistic or Christian?

MOFFAT: It was the same pattern that goes all the way from the Atlantic across through Sudan. Hissen Habre, one of the Northern leaders, was in the process of fighting his way back and taking over from a government installed when the Libyans ended their occupation. This was a patchwork government put together under a fellow named Goukouni under international sanction including an OAU peacekeeping force; Senegalese, Zairian, and Nigerian forces. So for the first month or two after I arrived we were trying to help this government. We were giving extensive food aid, for example. Suddenly from one day to the next without any warning we were told—communications were not very good—that the United States supported Hissen Habre. This was rather alarming, for we had our staff there and there were a lot of wild men around town with guns.

Q: Why was there this change in attitude in Washington?

MOFFAT: The Department of State, the United States government decided that Habre, who was well and favorably known to us, was going to win and we should support him. I

am a great admirer of Habre and have no argument with that, but I did have reservations about suddenly putting a post in the field which has no protection in such danger.

Q: This is almost unbelievable. Why did this happen? Was this ineptitude? Did we have to make such an announcement. Could we not have cooled it until one side or the other had taken over?

MOFFAT: I suspect there was considerable debate within the government and nobody thought to prepare the post. There were other people on the circuit. The OAU had to be notified, our allies had to be notified, and word would get back to the Chadians. N'djamena was in many ways a frightening place with several private armies including 12 year-olds with Kalashnikovs. Something of a mini-Beirut. They were hairy times.

Q: We had already gone through the terrible trauma of the takeover of our Embassy in Tehran and so this was not an unsophisticated era. We are talking about 1982 or so. Did you get any feeling that they were saying "everybody get out for awhile while we settle this"? Did they just tell you?

MOFFAT: They just told us. They did not tell the Chadian government. Our concern was that the government, such as it was, would find out.

Q: Did it?

MOFFAT: I don't know if it did or didn't. The government just tended to collapse. The last few days they kept coming to us to ask, "who shall we put in a new government?" We overnighted across the river in Cameroon when the battle for N'djamena took place. Over the years we had established a house there just for this purpose. We actually came under more fire there by misdirected firing than if we had stayed.

Hissen Habre came into power. In his way on an African scale, he was and is a great man. That spring we had Famine Number One and War Number One.

Q: You were saying you had your War Number One and Famine Number One?

MOFFAT: This was in 1983 when the bad Chadians under Goukouni accompanied by Libyans fought their way down to the point where we evacuated the spouses and children. Then miraculously the Chadians fought them off back to the north. The French and Zairians eventually came in and sort of drew a line in the sand and for a long time Chad lasted as a de facto divided country. Habre was very dependent on military equipment from us and the French and we went through some difficult times together. He went up to Faya Largeau where he came from and just squeaked out before the Libyans came in. I saw him under very tough circumstances and once or twice his icy demeanor cracked. I worried that this might undermine my role there, for he is proud of his self-control. But it didn't and indeed brought us closer together, which was useful.

Q: You were in a close to a combat position. Why would an American ambassador be up in that situation?

MOFFAT: I did not go up to Faya. Habre had come back. We were supplying a great deal of military equipment. President Reagan in one swoop gave us twenty-five million dollars of military equipment and services under a little known legislative provision that allowed us to draw from the U.S. forces directly. We had equipment, C-130s, C-141s (military transport aircraft) flying in and out. It was the most operational time I have ever had. We spent most of our time at the airport. If it was not military equipment it was food aid. So the assignment was wonderful and fascinating and very much involved with operations.

Q: How did you deal with Habre?

MOFFAT: Necessity made me deal with him a lot and then, I think, inclination took over. We both benefited from it. He was a little like the Eric Williams model I mentioned; he wanted people, reasonably intelligent people, he could talk to that were not potential replacements for him. No problem of access. Sometimes several times a week, sometimes

a couple of weeks would go by. He wanted to keep in touch and we wanted to keep in touch. He was fascinated with the possibilities of military equipment.

Q: Sort of like going through the Sears and Roebuck catalogue?

MOFFAT: At one point we brought him boxes of books on the armaments of the world and he would go through them. The only trouble was that he would say, “I want this. I want that.” He is a great man in that he came out of a limited background, a northerner from a small town from a tribe noted for war and cattle stealing. He got some education and realized that he was a nationalist at heart. In many ways he is a mini-de Gaulle. He lives for Chadian nationalism. He realized that he was going to have to have national reconciliation and national reconstruction. He did a lot of courageous things, bringing an equal number of southerners into the government, a dosage, as the French would say, for goodies and all that. He has brought Chad closer to being a real country than anybody could have believed possible.

Q: What was the American interest in Chad?

MOFFAT: American interest was entirely derived from Libya. The Libyans had, before I got there, occupied N'djamena for a year and still was a presence up north. The surrounding black African countries were terrified that the Libyans were going to do bad things to them, coming through Chad. Except for Libya we would have been treating Chad the way we do Niger or Togo.

Q: Why was Libya picking on Chad? I look at the map and Libya also bounds Niger, the Sudan.

MOFFAT: Well, from time to time Libya has picked on Niger, Sudan, Egypt and Tunisia. There is a bitterly disputed area called the Aozou Strip at the top of Chad. Moreover Libya has more nebulous claims to a large part of Chad. At various times the Libyans have been thought to want to extend through Chad their way into Africa, whether just Muslim Africa or

all of black Africa, who knows? Anyway, they were willing to throw into battle thousands of men and millions of dollars, high performance attack helicopters, high performance MiGs, tanks, God knows. They were estimated to have lost a billion dollars worth of military equipment when the Chadians briefly threw them out of the Aozou Strip two or three years ago. The Libyans, for whatever reason, were willing to expend money and people attacking the Chadians.

Q: Once it became a matter of the Libyans being in there, there was no doubt of what we were going to do?

MOFFAT: No doubt. President Reagan gave the twenty-five million dollars and subsequently there were other tranches of this sort of money on top. Also there was a five or six million dollar annual military assistance program. We got into the tens of millions in food aid, many tens of millions. Chad was afflicted by the same 1983 drought that you read about in Ethiopia and Sudan. We were off the rock and movie star circuit so we did not get the publicity. We did, however, do very well. People got the food. By virtue of being a small country, things were easier. The Chadians, unlike the Ethiopians and perhaps the Sudanese, were willing to let the foreigners run the effort largely unhampered.

Q: Did we have an AID mission there?

MOFFAT: We had an AID mission. We didn't when I first got there, I was running a $15 million a year food aid program by myself. I could not even understand the AID messages with their jargon.

Q: Everyone is taking another look at AID, what are we doing to countries? Are we sponsoring programs that lead to urban congestion and all their problems. Were we looking at where we were going? AID started later there than in many countries.

MOFFAT: Particularly among some of the missionaries there was the feeling that we were creating permanent handout seekers. And that may have been true in the south,

but particularly in the center the drought was so horrendous, the infrastructure was wiped out, wells that had never failed in known history had failed. Livestock had to be killed. It was so horrendous that you could not deny food aid on the grounds that it would affect people's habits of independence. The short answer in Chad was that, sure, there was a lot of discussion one way and another, but the situation just did not permit doing other than coming in and saving lives.

Q: This is an unclassified interview so I will let you deal with the question how you can. We have talked about AID and the military, how about the CIA, was it helpful, or was this the sort of situation that the CIA could not do much in?

MOFFAT: There have been allegations in the press, magazines that the CIA had already been involved with Habre when he was out of power. I would note that things were very operational in Chad. There was much activity involving military equipment and the like, and a need in Washington and N'djamena for intelligence of military use. Washington also had a great interest in the Libyan military equipment that was captured.

Let me go back. When we got there there was no housing, no nothing. My wife came three months later. We were all in one small house with holes in the roofs. Living two to three in a room, eating communally. Staffed by “rovers”, people who would come in for a month or two to be a secretary or communications officer. Then we grew and started rebuilding. The town was sort of a mini-Dresden. We had to take buildings and rebuild them. We grew but we had the great advantage of being small. There are many disadvantages to being small. Having always had too few people to do what we had to do, I think we did it fairly well. My successor changed my emphasis on lean staffing, and the place has grown mightily since. There was a sense of purpose and the morale was extraordinarily high when we were living under these incredible situations. The first time it rained no one could sleep, the beds were all soaked. There was constant danger of being killed, shooting going on. Then later, documented threats by the Libyans to kill us. That was wonderful for morale and it kept everybody together.

If there were other agencies involved, and over time different agencies were involved, and they all shared the dangers and discomfort.

Q: Then you left this post and retired?

MOFFAT: No, I came back and was number two at the National War College. That was my last assignment.

Q: Was there anything else we should touch on regarding Chad?

MOFFAT: Oh, there is lots, I could talk for hours, but...

Q: We have already gotten part of this in the beginning in which you were not backed up well in Washington.

MOFFAT: It was not that we were not well backed up. Indeed, there was a disproportion in amount of attention and resources given to Chad and Chet Crocker, the Assistant Secretary (for African Affairs), said that Chad was our one African success for the year 1983.

Q: I believe it is important to show what can happen. You can't sit on things too long, it can leave a post dangling. You might say this is the same thing as in 1979, "What do you do about the Shah?" He was seeking a place to find refuge and that helped precipitate the takeover of our embassy in Tehran. Your problem came out all right, but it did leave you in an awkward situation. But overall you felt you got good support?

MOFFAT: We got good support. Thanks to the Libyans, for awhile there we could get anything we wanted and we got a tremendous amount of attention. We were lucky enough so we could avoid non-essential visits from Washington. We did not get Mrs. Bush, we did not get movie stars. The whole time I was there we had one congressional visitor and that was incidental. We could do our job.

Q: Get these civilians out of the battlefield. A quick question about the National War College. I have talked to many of my colleagues who are going to war colleges now say there really is a tremendous split between the military and the State Department attitudes, the military really think of the State Department as being the appeasers and that sort of thing. Did you find this?

MOFFAT: A few observations about the War College. We were one-quarter civilian, and of those anywhere up to twenty were State. The military came in with some preconceptions, but it was a wild success basically. The military and State each got to know the other and their problems. Maybe because it is the National War College and has a slightly higher student body. Where the military students have strong prejudices that are not always removed by the year of study are the press and Congress. They are very anti-media and anti-Congress and incidentally frequently anti-the Israeli lobby. That is the one that surprised me the most. I phrased it that way, for they are not necessarily anti-Israel. They have come up in staff jobs and had positions overturned for Israel-related domestic political reasons. There is a very strong feeling in that sense. But State-military difficulties, I did not see it. Often the military and State people would react in ways you would not expect. The State people would opt for a war, in set problems, when the military would not.

Q: I have heard this, that when you would have war games it was often the State people who would nuke the hell out of them. The military was much more cautious about this.

As a wrap-up, something we usually ask our interviewees. Looking back over you career, what gave you your greatest satisfaction?

MOFFAT: You may have noticed that I served abroad in each of the geographic bureaus and except for consular officers this is very rare. I enjoyed the variety thoroughly. Being a generalist does not help your career, but I enjoyed savoring my dilettantism. Maybe this is not the right word. I enjoyed the variety. We did not have a post that we disliked from the point of view of living or anything else.

Q: If a young man or woman comes to you today and says, "Mr. Ambassador, I am thinking of going into the Foreign Service". How would you reply?

MOFFAT: I think one of the standard responses to that is: it's not what it used to be. I would be tempted to give that answer, but I hear friends say that about almost every line of work. Certainly the things that are somewhat similar such as the military do not have the satisfaction level they used to, some of the professions such as medicine have problems. I think that if you sited the Foreign Service in the whole framework of job satisfaction that it would be probably well worth it, but it is not what it used to be.

Q: I think that when we came in, I came in in 1955 and you came in in 1956, I am sure that your grandfather would be shaking his head. We represented a whole different group then, I guess the basic challenges are still there.

Thank you very much.

End of interview